HOSEA 1

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS*

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
		Superscription		Title
1:1	1:1	1:1	1:1	1:1
Hosea's Wife and Children	The Family of Hosea	Hosea Marries the Prostitute Gomer and Gives Her Children Prophetically Significant Names	Hosea's Wife and Children	Hosea's Marriage: His Three Children
1:2-5	1:2-3 (2b)	1:2-3	1:2	1:2a
				1:2b
			1:3-5	1:3-5
	1:4-5 (4-5)	1:4-5		
1:6-7	1:6-7 (6-7)	1:6-7	1:6-7	1:6-7
1:8-9	1:8-9 (9)	1:8-9	1:8-9	1:8-9
	The Restoration of Israel	Israel's Punishment Is Not Final	Israel Is To Be Restored	
1:10-11 (10-11)	1:10-2:1 (10-2:1)	1:10-2:13	1:10-2:1	

* Although they are not inspired, paragraph divisions are the key to understanding and following the original author's intent. Each modern translation has divided and summarized the paragraphs. Every paragraph has one central topic, truth, or thought. Each version encapsulates that topic in its own distinct way. As you read the text, ask yourself which translation fits your understanding of the subject and verse divisions.

In every chapter we must read the Bible first and try to identify its subjects (paragraphs), then compare our understanding with the modern versions. Only when we understand the original author's intent by following his logic and presentation can we truly understand the Bible. Only the

original author is inspired—readers have no right to change or modify the message. Bible readers do have the responsibility of applying the inspired truth to their day and their lives.

Note that all technical terms and abbreviations are explained fully in the following SPECIAL TOPICS: Hebrew Grammatical Terms, Textual Criticism, and Glossary.

READING CYCLE THREE (see "Bible Interpretation Seminar")
FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

A. Hosea 1-3 forms an initial literary unit which describes
   1. the marriage of Hosea to Gomer at God's direction, Hos. 1 (told in the third person, biographical)
   2. a poetic account of Israel's unfaithfulness to YHWH, Hos. 2
   3. Hosea's purchase and remarriage to Gomer at God's direction, chapter 3 (told in the first person, autobiographical)

B. Each of the three subsections concludes with a promise of restoration.
   1. Hos. 1:10-11
   2. Hos. 2:14-23
   3. Hos. 3:5

C. Chapter 2 mirrors chapters 1 and 3. In Hos. 2:1-13, YHWH's anger at Israel's unfaithfulness is followed by His offer of restoration (cf. Amos 2:14-23).

D. Israel's idolatry was not only a violation of law, but of love! Possibly the best analogy to comprehend covenant is the marriage vows!

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: HOSEA 1:1

1 The word of the LORD which came to Hosea the son of Beeri, during the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz *and* Hezekiah, kings of Judah, and during the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash, king of Israel.

1:1 "The word of the LORD" This is a common opening phrase (used over 250 times in the OT) for the prophets (i.e., Hosea, Joel, Micah, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi). It shows that the prophets did not speak out of their own understanding, but from God's initiating revelation. The term "word" (BDB 182) relates to the Hebrew concept of the independent power of the spoken word (cf. Gen. 1; Isa. 55:11; John 1:1,14; Rev. 19:13).

For "LORD see SPECIAL TOPIC: NAMES FOR DEITY, D.

▣ **"Hosea"** The name means "salvation" (BDB 448). When one adds the covenant name for God, "YHWH," to the Hebrew root "salvation," the word "Joshua" (cf. Num. 13:8,16) or "Jesus" (cf. Matt. 1:21) results.

▣ **"the son of Beeri"** The name means "my well" (BDB 92). We know nothing about him. The only other occurrence of the name is Esau's Hittite father-in-law (cf. Gen. 26:34).

▣ **"during the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, Kings of Judah"** It seems rather unusual that a prophet from the Northern Kingdom would list the Judean kings in such detail. This list of kings covers a long period of time (see SPECIAL TOPIC: KINGS OF THE DIVIDED KINGDOM).

This list of Judean kings is identical to the introduction to Isaiah, therefore, many scholars have asserted that Hosea is trying to show that he is a contemporary of this southern prophet. Also it possibly shows that

1. Hosea was against the division of the kingdoms and saw Judah as the only legitimate covenant hope
2. this verse was added by later Judean scribes

With so many theories it is obvious that moderns do not know!

▣ **"during the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash, king of Israel"** It is surprising that no other Israelite kings are listed (i.e., Zechariah, Shallum, Menahem, Pekahiah, Pekah, Hoshea). There have been several theories concerning this:

1. there was political confusion after Jeroboam II's death and several kings only reigned for a short period of time
2. the prophet spoke to both kingdoms
3. Judah is the legitimate Davidic line (cf. Amos 9:11-15)

For the historical setting of Jeroboam II's day see Introduction to Amos, VI.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: HOSEA 1:2-5

[2]When the LORD first spoke through Hosea, the LORD said to Hosea, "Go, take to yourself a wife of harlotry and *have* children of harlotry; for the land commits flagrant harlotry, forsaking the LORD." [3]So he went and took Gomer the daughter of Diblaim, and she conceived and bore him a son. [4]And the LORD said to him, "Name him Jezreel; for yet a little while, and I will punish the house of Jehu for the bloodshed of Jezreel, and I will put an end to the kingdom of the house of Israel. [5]On that day I will break the bow of Israel in the valley of Jezreel."

1:2

NASB, NKJV, TEV	**"When the LORD first spoke through Hosea"**
NKJV	**"*When* the LORD began to speak by Hosea"**
NJB	**"The beginning of what Yahweh said through Hosea"**
LXX	**"The beginning of the word of the LORD in Hosea"**

G. Campbell Morgan, *Hosea*, pp. 9-11, asserts that the ASV, "When Jehovah spoke at first by Hosea," is the temporal key to see that Hosea, looking back over his life, writes Hos. 1:2 from the advantage of hindsight. Therefore, he asserts that Gomer was faithful when he married her, but that she became unfaithful. Therefore, from God's foreknowledge, He knew what would happen and now from Hosea's later years he, too, knows well the tragic marriage (also see Gleason Archer, *Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties*, pp. 294-295 and *Hard Sayings of the Bible*, pp. 322-324).

▣ **"Go, take to yourself a wife of harlotry"** YHWH's first message to Hosea has two IMPERATIVES and the implication of a third.

1. "Go" (BDB 229, KB 246, *Qal* IMPERATIVE)
2. "Take" (BDB 542, KB 534, *Qal* IMPERATIVE)
3. "Have children," implied by context

These commands, related to marriage and children, imply that God called Hosea while he was very young, possibly around the time of the consummation of his adolescent rites (13-14 years old).

The term "harlotry" (BDB 276, KB 275) is PLURAL, which can convey (1) intensity or (2) repitition in Hebrew. It seems to refer to either a cultic prostitute (cf. Hos. 4:14; NET Bible) or probably a typical woman of his day who, because of the cultural climate of Ba'alism, was involved in promiscuous activities (at least initial sexual union with priest to ensure fertility) and, therefore, was considered (biblically) to be a harlot. This has caused much discussion among commentators:

1. Origen said that nothing unworthy of God should be taken literally, but must be spiritualized /allegorized (followed Philo).
2. Jerome and Iben Ezra (many rabbis) interpret this as a vision.
3. Calvin and E. J. Young interpret this as an allegory.
4. Martin Luther interprets this as Gomer being a faithful wife and they only acted out this drama to convey the message.
5. Wellhausen says that she became promiscuous after marriage. (KB lists one meaning as "inclined to fornicate").

The term *znh* (BDB 275,276) in two forms (VERB, NOUN) is used four times in Hos. 1:2 and is translated variously:

1. NASB, NKJV – harlotry
2. NRSV – whoredom
3. TEV – unfaithful
4. NJB – whore

The combination of the *Qal* INFINITIVE ABSOLUTE and the *Qal* IMPERFECT of the same root intensifies the meaning:

1. has been habitually committing fornication (temporal)
2. guilty of the vilest adultery or great harlotry (type of sin)

Violated, faithful love, not just the violation of rules, becomes the central message of the prophet. The VERB is used in Hos. 1:2 (twice); 2:5; 3:3; 4:10,12,13,14,15,18(twice); 5:3; 9:1 and the NOUN in Hos. 1:2 (twice); 2:2,4; 4:12; 5:4. Israel does not stand guilty before an impartial judge, but before a brokenhearted lover! There are other places in the prophets where the marriage analogy is used to describe the intense relationship between YHWH and Israel (cf. Jeremiah 3; Ezekiel 16, also note Eph. 5:23-33).

▣ **"*have* children of harlotry"** The three children are given prophetic names. It is uncertain if the last two are Hosea's biological children because of the promiscuity of Gomer.

▣ **"for the land commits flagrant harlotry"** It is obvious that God is using an analogy between the prophet's experience of disloyalty and God's experience of disloyalty with Israel! However, the real purpose is to reveal the broken heart and forgiving love of YHWH. Hosea's great truth is the undeserved, faithful, lasting love of God!

When thinking about the analogy between Israel and YWHW illustrated in Gomer and Hosea, the question comes, was Gomer unfaithful before the marriage? If so then how do we explain the analogy?

1. Abraham was a polytheist along with his family in Ur before God revealed Himself to him (cf. Genesis 11).
2. Israel was already involved in idolatry before the Exodus (cf. Exodus 32 or Amos 5:25-27).

Israel's repeated attraction to idolatry is characterized by Moses as "they play the harlot with their gods" (e.g., Exod. 34:15,16; Lev. 17:7; 20:5,6; Num. 15:39; 25:1; Deut. 31:16). This phrase

was both literal and figurative when it referred to fertility worship. The background of the metaphor was YHWH as husband and Israel as wife (e.g., Isa. 54:5; 62:4-5; Jer.2:2; 3:1,6-9,14; 31:32; Ezek. 16; 23; Hosea 2:19).

SPECIAL TOPIC: FERTILITY WORSHIP OF THE ANE

1:3 "Gomer" There are two people in the OT by this name.

1. Grandson, son of Japheth (cf. Gen. 10:2,3; 1 Chr. 1:5,6)
2. Hosea's wife

The meaning of the name is uncertain, but the same consonants mean "end" or "come to an end" (BDB 170). One wonders if this also has symbolic meaning since the children's names and possibly Diblaim, her father, are symbolic (similar to the names in Ruth).

▣ **"Diblaim"** This term seems to be related to the "raisin cakes" (BDB 84) of Hos. 3:1. It can mean "lump of figs" or "raisin cakes" (BDB 179). Raisin cakes were a part of the Canaanite fertility ritual (cf. Jer. 44:19).

▣ **"she conceived and bore him a son"** It is clearly stated that Hosea is the father of the first child, but not the other two.

1:4 "Name him" This VERB (BDB 894, KB 1128) is a *Qal* IMPERATIVE. The prophetic purpose related to Israel is seen in these children's names.

▣ **"Jezreel"** "Jezreel" means "God scatters," "God sows," or "God makes fruitful." Therefore, this term can refer to

1. judgment (cf. Hos. 1:4-5)
2. prosperity (cf. Hos. 2:22-23)

In context, #1 is the obvious meaning. It refers to both a city and a valley in Galilee (Valley of Armageddon). This northern city (Omri's second capital) was the site of the slaughter of Ahab's house (the one whose wife popularized fertility worship in Israel) by Jehu (cf. 2 Kgs. 9:7-10:28), and it became a symbol or idiom for judgment.

Was Jehu punished for doing as he was commanded? This is the question that *Hard Sayings of the Bible*, IVP, answers (pp. 235-236). Jehu did as God commanded him and wiped out the house of Ahab, but he did it with an intensity and scope that draws God's condemnation.

▣ **"for yet a little while"** This temporal phrase (the two ADVERBS BDB 728 plus BDB 589) is used seven times, six of them are in judgment passages (cf. Ps. 37:10; Isa. 10:25; Jer. 51:33; Hos. 1:4; Hag. 2:6). The one positive usage is Isa. 29:17.

▣

NASB, NRSV, TEV, NJB, REB, JPSOA	**"I will punish"**
NKJV, LXX, Peshitta	**"I will avenge"**

The MT has the VERB "visit" (BDB 823, KB 955, *Qal* PERFECT with *waw*), which can denote YHWH coming for

1. blessing – Gen. 21:1; 50:24,25; Ruth 1:6; Isa. 23:17; Jer. 15:15; 27:22; 29:10; 32:6
2. judgment – Hos. 1:4; 2:15; Exod. 20:5; 34:7; Deut. 5:9; Isa. 10:12; Jer. 9:25; 11:22; Amos 3:2,14

1:5 "I will break the bow of Israel" The bow is a symbol of military power and stability. This occurred during the reign of the Assyrian king, Shalmanesar V, who invaded Israel in 724 B.C. but the naturally fortified capital of Samaria did not fall until 722 B.C. in the reign of Sargon II.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: HOSEA 1:6-7

[6]Then she conceived again and gave birth to a daughter. And the LORD said to him, "Name her Lo-ruhamah, for I will no longer have compassion on the house of Israel, that I would ever forgive them. [7]But I will have compassion on the house of Judah and deliver them by the LORD their God, and will not deliver them by bow, sword, battle, horses or horsemen."

1:6 "Name her Lo-ruhaman" Again the VERB is a *Qal* IMPERATIVE. The name means "not pitied" (BDB 520, cf. Hos. 2:4,23). The term "pity" (or "mercy" NKJV note; "compassion" BDB) is used for God's deep and tender feelings (cf. Ps. 103:13). It will be used in a positive sense in Hos. 2:19,23. God's judgment does not imply a lack of love, just the opposite (cf. Hos. 11:8-9; Heb. 12:6-13).

▣ **"that I would ever forgive them"** What a startling statement of the purposeful, unrelenting judgment of God (cf. Amos 8:7; 9:4). Yet, in the prophets this note of finality is always balanced with salvation oracles (cf. vv, 10-11).

Grammatically this is a *Qal* INFINITIVE ABSOLUTE (BDB 669) followed by a *Qal* IMPERFECT (BDB 669), the same form as in Hos. 1:2c. This form intensifes the VERB (i.e., "that I would ever forgive them").

1:7 "on the house of Judah" Hosea, like Amos, speaks to both kingdoms (cf. Hos. 1:7, 11; 4:15; 5:5, 8-15; 6:4, 11; 8:14; 10:11; 11:12; 12:2). Here God promises to spare Judah from the Assyrian invasion. He did this several different times. The exact number of Assyrian invasions of Palestine during this period is uncertain.

Because this statement is so shocking in a book written to Israel, many scholars have assumed it is a later Judean scribal addition. However, it may have been a way to condemn the formation of the northern tribes at the split in 922 B.C. All of the prophets condemned the northern kingdom, especially because of the rival worship sites (golden calves) of Bethel and Dan.

It may also have been a way of warning Judah not to follow Israel's path, but they did (cf. Jer. 3:6-10).

▣ **"I will not deliver them by bow, sword, battle, horses, or horseman"** God will deliver (BDB 446, KB 448, *Hiphil* PERFECT with *waw*) Judah from the same military power to which Israel will fall, but not by natural means, rather supernatural means (cf. 2 Kgs. 18:13-19:37; 2 Chr. 32:1-23; Isa. 36-37).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: HOSEA 1:8-9

[8]When she had weaned Lo-ruhamah, she conceived and gave birth to a son. [9]And the LORD said, "Name him Lo-ammi, for you are not My people and I am not your God."

1:8 "she had weaned. . .she conceived" The rapid conception of these three children may reflect Gomer's repeated, continuous, sexual activity.

1:9 "Name him Lo-ammi" The VERB is again a *Qal* IMPERATIVE. This term means "not my people" (BDB 520, cf. Hos. 2:23). It reflects the broken covenant (cf. Josh. 24:19-28; Jer. 31:32).

▣

NASB, NRSV	**"I am not your God"**
NKJV. REB, JPSOA, Peshitta	**"I will not be your *God*"**

TEV	**"I am not their God"**
NJB	**"I do not exist for you"**
LXX	**"I am not your I Am"**

In the MT there is no NOUN "God" (note the italics in NRSV and its total absence in the NJB). This phrase powerfully states the broken covenant. YHWH's covenant with Israel was conditional!

SPECIAL TOPIC: COVENANT

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: HOSEA 1:10-11

10Yet the number of the sons of Israel
Will be like the sand of the sea,
Which cannot be measured or numbered;
And in the place
Where it is said to them,
"You are not My people,"
It will be said to them,
"*You are* the sons of the living God."
11And the sons of Judah and the sons of Israel will be gathered together,
And they will appoint for themselves one leader,
And they will go up from the land,
For great will be the day of Jezreel.

1:10-11 After God's strong rejection of Israel (cf. Hos. 1:1-9; 2:1-13; 3:1-4), He offers acceptance (cf. Hos. 1:10-11; 2:14-23; 3:5). This swing in emphasis is characteristic of the prophet's presentation of God.

1:10 "Israel will be like the sand of the sea" In the Hebrew text chapter 2 begins with verse 1:10.

This refers to God's promise to Abraham (cf. Gen. 15:5; 22:17; 26:4; see full note at Gen. 15:5). This verse shows that there still is hope even in light of Hos. 1:9 (cf. Jer. 31:33; Amos 9:8-15).

Paul quotes this verse in Rom. 9:26 to express that God's mercy extends to the Gentiles. He also quotes Hosea 2:23 in Rom. 9:25. The innumerable people of God includes all of Adam's children!

SPECIAL TOPIC: TENSIONS BETWEEN OLD COVENANT PROPHETIC MODELS AND NEW COVENANT APOSTOLIC MODELS

▣ **"*You are* the sons of the living God"** This reflects the OT background for YHWH as Father. This fatherhood of God is not based on Genesis 1-2, but on His choice of Abraham and his descendants. See SPECIAL TOPIC: THE FATHERHOOD OF GOD and SPECIAL TOPIC: CHILDREN OF GOD

It is a covenant relationship. It is seen in two ways:

1. the title "father" or its analogy used, Deut. 32:6; Ps. 103:13; Isa. 63:16; 64:8; Jer. 3:4,19; 31:9; Mal. 1:6; 2:10; 3:17
2. the use of "son" or "child," Exod. 4:22; Deut. 14:1; 32:5,19; Isa. 1:2; Jer. 3:22; 31:20; Hos. 1:10; 11:1

The phrase "the living God," is the root meaning of the name YHWH (see SPECIAL TOPIC: NAMES FOR DEITY, D. YHWH is alive; idols are not! This verse is quoted in the NT as a promise to the Gentiles being included in the covenant people (cf. Rom. 9:24-26 and 1 Pet. 2:10).

A good article about "who is the Israel of God?" is found in *Hard Sayings of the Bible*, pp. 633-636. Because inspired NT authors quote OT texts and apply OT titles to believers, the people of God have more to do with faith in Christ than, "who is your mother" (i.e., race)!

1:11 "the sons of Judah and the sons of Israel will be gathered together" The VERB (BDB 867, KB 1062, *Niphal* PERFECT with *waw*) is used of God's eschatological gathering of His people (e.g., Deut. 30:1-10; Isa. 54:7; 56:8; Jer. 31:10-14; Micah 2:12; 4:6). This verse speaks of a restoration of the united monarchy under a Davidic king (3:5; Ezek. 34:23; 37:15-28; Amos 9:11), which makes it Messianic. Many have seen this phrase as a promise reversal of Hos. 1:4. The term Jezreel has the connotation "fruitful" in this verse!

▣ **"they will appoint for themselves one leader"** Notice the divine aspect in Hos. 1:10 and 11a, yet also the human response in Hos. 1:11b. These two covenantal aspects must be held together in revelatory tension (e.g., Deut. 17:14 vs. 15). Both are true, but how this can be so is a mystery! It is this two-sided interpersonal tension which makes marriage the ideal human metaphor for biblical covenant.

The "one leader" is a sharp contrast to the historical reality of Israeli leadership after the death of Jeroboam II. There was a succession of brief reigns and political turmoil!

▣

NASB	**"they will go up from the land"**
NKJV, Peshitta	**"they shall come up out of the land"**
NRSV	**"they will possession of the land"**
TEV	**"they will grow prosperous in their land"**
NJB	**"they will spread far beyond their country"**
REB, LXX	**"they will spring up from the land"**
JPSOA	**"they shall rise from the ground"**

The MT has a VERB (BDB 748, KB 828, *Qal* PERFECT with *waw*) which means "to go up," "to ascend." This could refer to several different things.

1. return from exile
2. retake possession of Canaan
3. possess a prosperous land
4. arise out of poverty

The land of Canaan was YHWH's land. He gave it to His covenant people. But as He removed the Canaanites because of their sin (cf. Gen. 15:12-21), He also had to remove Abraham's descendants because of their sin (i.e., the Assyrian and Babylonian exiles). This phrase is asserting the cvoenant people's restoration to Canaan.

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